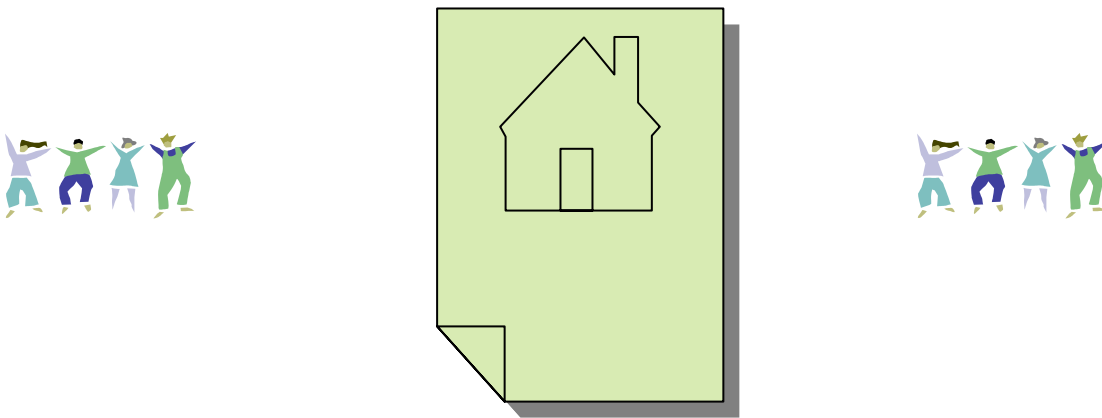




FACILITIES: NEW CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION GUIDANCE



**The Department of Education
Office of Early Childhood Education and
The Office of School Facilities Financing**

The New Jersey Department of Education gratefully acknowledges the hard work and dedication of numerous individuals for their participation and commitment in the development of the guidelines. The department also acknowledges all the members of the Facilities Standards Subcommittee whose contributions in drafting preschool facilities guidelines will help remove barriers to the efficient implementation of the Abbott school construction programs in the Abbott Districts. Special thanks to all of the individuals who responded by letter or e-mail to provide input in the final document. The educational facilities regulations *N.J.A.C. 6A:26* cited throughout this guidance document apply to all districts in the state.

Facilities: New Construction and Renovation

Responsibilities of the District

The district board of education shall ensure that a facilities needs assessment is developed for all public schools, private providers and Head Start agencies that currently provide Abbott preschool classrooms. The Early Childhood Advisory Council should oversee the facilities needs assessment. The board shall then develop a plan to ensure adequate space for their preschool population by amending the district's Long Range Facilities Plan. This plan shall not supplant adequate facilities already provided by private providers. The Department of Education strongly encourages the board to include nonprofit private providers and/or Head Start centers in the Long Range Facilities Plan for renovation and/or expansion, if the agency owns the building (P. L. 2000, C.72 section 5, pg. 2) and the proposed building will accommodate a minimum of 90 Abbott children. (*N.A.J.C.* 6A:26-3.11). The contract requirements section (*N.J.A.C.* 19:36-4.2) specifies contract provisions which must be included in contracts between the private provider and the district. Private providers not currently contracting with a board of education to provide preschool services must meet the preschool facilities standards prior to entering into a contract with the board.

A. Design of Preschool Facilities

1. A physical environment impacts both the behavior and development of children and the adults working in that environment. Adequate physical space affects children's level of involvement and the types of interactions between their teachers and their peers. School facilities for preschool students shall afford space for instruction, administration, and student services, as set forth in the facilities efficiency standards (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:26-6.4).

B. Preschool Classrooms

1. Both the indoor and outdoor preschool space shall be safe, clean, attractive and spacious so that children are not crowded, (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:26-6.4).
2. For both new construction and expansion, preschool classrooms shall be no higher than the second floor of a building (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:26-6.4 (B2)).
3. 950 net square feet of classroom space shall be provided for each Abbott classroom (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:26-3.11 (b) & 6A:26-6.4 (h)).
4. 50 square feet of usable space per child shall be provided that is free and open and excludes storage and major pieces of equipment and built in furnishings (*N.J.A.C.* 6A:26-6.4). "Usable" space includes materials and pieces of equipment that are easily movable.

5. When planning new construction and/or community provider expansion or renovation, each preschool classroom shall have varied and ample types of storage that meet the general classroom needs of both children and staff.
6. Each classroom shall have open accessible storage, such as cubbies for each child for coat storage, personal papers and change of clothing; classroom space allocated for the teacher's coat and personal items; and additional storage, inaccessible to children, to store cots, bedding and classroom materials. Ample storage space must be planned in order to avoid the use of non-storage areas, i.e., bathrooms, hallways, etc., for storage purposes.
7. Each classroom shall have an attached toilet room that is accessible to students with physical disabilities (*N.J.A.C. 5:23-7* and *6A:26*), built to meet the needs of young children, identified for their exclusive use and barrier free in design as per *N.J.A.C. 5:23-7*. For safety reasons the use of wooden blocks as steps is not recommended. Classroom bathrooms shall be open to view, (in the sight of the teacher/teacher assistant), as a safety precaution (*N.J.A.C. 6A:26-6.4*). Preschool facilities shall provide a diaper/clothes changing area in the classroom (*N.J.A.C. 6A:26-6.4-g.3*). Separate from the bathroom, each classroom should have access to a sink at the appropriate height for a child.
8. Floors shall be clean and safe to minimize the potential for illnesses. Hardwood, vinyl flooring or rubber floors should be installed for resilience (*N.J.A.C. 6A:26-6.4*). Permanent carpeting should not be installed due to serious concerns for children's health.
9. Classrooms shall have large child-safe windows allowing children and adults to view the outdoors and providing natural light. Natural light shall be supplemented with controlled artificial lighting (*N.J.A.C. 6A:26-6.4*). Easily cleaned or vacuumed window treatments, such as blinds or shades, should be used.
10. Adequate wiring shall attempt to meet both current and future needs of the facility. Electrical, voice and data receptacles should be installed for technology and communication. Child safety receptacles shall be utilized through out the building (*N.J.A.C. 6A:26-6.4*).

C. Classroom Environment

1. Furniture shall be arranged so that children can work individually, together in small groups, or in large-group pathways to move from one area to another. The room shall contain movable pieces of furniture and/or equipment in order to maximize space flexibility. Wall space shall be available to display children's work in the classroom and throughout the school/center. Counters and any built-in seating shall be accessible to children, usually a foot lower than the ideal height for adults. Seating shall be about 10-12 inches above the floor. Open shelves, accessible to children, shall be available for educational materials to encourage

independence and learning. Small, semi-private, easily supervised places shall be available indoors and outdoors to provide children with opportunities for solitude. Classroom environments shall include soft, non-allergenic spaces, such as area rugs and bean bag chairs. Sound absorbing materials, such as acoustical tiles, should be installed to minimize noise. Eating is a learning activity, and children should eat their meals in their classroom- not in a larger room, such as a cafeteria.

2. Sufficient space shall be available for the following needs: office space for administrative purposes; multi-purpose room for conferences, parent, family support or community meetings; gross motor room for indoor play; kitchen or food preparation area, as is appropriate; faculty room/space for teacher preparation; sick area, located near the office or reception area, and adult handicapped accessible bathroom.

D. Entrance/Exits and Security

1. Facilities designs shall be developed to ensure the safety of children. Pickup and drop-off area should be safely situated and sufficiently large to provide safe entrances and exits for children and adults. Drop-off areas should be positioned with clearly marked walkways from drop-off areas into buildings (*N.J.A.C. 6A:26-6.3, (c)1-2*).
 - a. Students shall enter through a wide, bright, spacious and clearly defined entrance with easy access to classrooms. All exit doors must lock and a process should be implemented requiring all visitors to report to the office or electronic doors should be installed and controlled from the office, except when a staff member is on hand to greet parents and children. All entrance and exit doors should be secured with an audible alarm to prevent children from leaving the building and unauthorized individuals from entering the premises. Exit doors shall have a push-open lever rather than a pull-open lever or doorknobs as per code.
 - b. All operable windows must have inside locks. A communication system should be installed in each classroom to allow for emergency calls. Whenever possible, adequate parking should be available for staff, parents and visitors.

E. Outdoor Play

1. Outdoor play is critical to preschool development. Facilities designs should include adequate outdoor space for larger motor activities.
 - a. There shall be 100 square feet per child of outdoor play space for each child using that space at one time (*N.J.A.C. 6A:26-6.4 d*). Surface areas should include soil, sand, grass, hills, and a large, flat even surface for wheeled toys. There shall be adequate padding (safety matting) under climbing toys.
 - b. Equipment shall be developmentally appropriate and in accordance with playground safety rules that conform to the playground safety sub code of the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code as specified in *N.J.A.C. 5:23-11*. The outdoor play area shall include equipment for sliding, climbing, crawling, balancing, running and imaginative play. Playground design shall be barrier-free and sensitive to all disabilities. Soil in play areas shall be tested for lead and other contaminants, according to the recommendations of the local health department, as required when new construction activity has occurred. All outdoor play areas shall have convenient access to toilets and drinking water. Storage for outdoor play equipment shall be readily accessible to teachers.
 - c. Play areas shall provide a mix of sun and shade with sheltered spaces for solitary, small-group and quiet activities. If possible, there should be some access to water for play.
 - d. Centers that use an on-site playground constructed on or before April 18, 2000 shall ensure that resilient playground surfacing complies with the Playground Safety Sub code of the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code (*N.J.A.C. 5:23-11.4*).